



James Cleverly MP
Minister for the Middle East and North Africa
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

24 February 2021

Dear James,

UK policy on Yemen

As you will be aware, the International Relations and Defence Committee (IRDC) has maintained an interest in developments in Yemen since the publication of the report, *Yemen: Giving peace a chance* in February 2019.¹

Following the Biden Administration's decision to end American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arms sales, and the Urgent Question in the House of Commons on 8 February² (repeated in the House of Lords on 10 February), the IRDC has considered the UK's policy on Yemen.

Arms exports and support for the Saudi-led coalition

The (then) International Relations Committee concluded in 2019 that “**given the volume and type of arms being exported to the Saudi-led coalition, we believe they are highly likely to be the cause of significant civilian casualties in Yemen, risking the contravention of international humanitarian law**”. It called on the Government to “**be prepared to suspend some key export licences to members of the coalition**”. We reiterate these points.

We also remain concerned that there is tension between the Government's ongoing support for the Saudi-led coalition on the one hand, and its role as a major donor of humanitarian relief and attempts to broker a diplomatic solution on the other. In your response to the Urgent Question on 8 February, you said that “We welcome the recent statement by President Biden to instigate a review of US foreign policy towards Yemen”. In this regard:

1. Will the Government likewise undertake to instigate a review of UK foreign policy towards Yemen?
2. In what ways does the Government assess that its military support for the Saudi-led coalition is contributing to ending the conflict in Yemen?

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldintrel/290/290.pdf>

² <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-02-08/debates/DD75DAB2-90FB-42FF-B3EC-095A91F0C49B/Yemen?highlight=yemen#contribution-779388D6-45DE-461B-A794-F9A7EDA16AE5>

3. In your view, what would an effective and durable solution to the crisis in Yemen look like, and what is the Government doing diplomatically to achieve this?
4. How is UK policy to Yemen co-ordinated between departments? Do you believe that ongoing support for the Saudi-led coalition on the one hand, and the provision of humanitarian relief and attempts to broker a diplomatic solution on the other represents a coherent, integrated approach?
5. What assessment has the Government made of the potential risks of a divergence in approach to Yemen by the UK and its principal ally, the US?
6. Please set out the Government's revised methodology for considering current and future export licences for arms exports to Saudi Arabia. In what ways did the methodology change as a result of the review that followed the Court of Appeal's conclusion that the Government's decision-making process was "irrational"?

Humanitarian funding

We welcome the UK's provision of humanitarian assistance to Yemen. We have the following questions:

7. You said on 8 February that the UK had pledged over £1 billion for the humanitarian response since the conflict in Yemen began. Has the UK now provided in full the sum it pledged to contribute for 2020-21? What impact, if any, have cuts to the UK's official development assistance (ODA) budget in 2020-21, as a result of the fall in gross national income (GNI), had on UK funding for Yemen?
8. You stated on 8 February that "Yemen will remain a UK priority country" for humanitarian assistance. Will ODA funding for Yemen for 2021-22 therefore be protected from the cuts to be made as a result of the Government's planned reduction of ODA spending to 0.5% of GNI? If you are not able to provide this information, please inform us on what date this information will be made available.
9. The World Food Programme has said that the international humanitarian response to Yemen is "critically underfunded", and that the Humanitarian Response plan received US\$1.9 billion of the US\$3.4 billion required in 2020.³ What action is the Government taking to encourage other donors to provide the necessary funding? Please provide us with an update on the work of the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, in this regard.
10. What is your assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the humanitarian situation in Yemen? What actions is the UK taking in Yemen to address the impact of the pandemic?

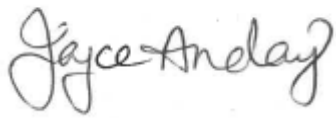
³ <https://www.wfp.org/news/acute-malnutrition-threatens-half-children-under-five-yemen-2021-un>

Iran

11. What discussions has the UK had with Iran on (1) the humanitarian situation in Yemen and actions to address it, and (2) how to end fighting in Yemen and establish a durable peace?

We look forward to your response on these points.

Yours, as ever

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jayce Anelay".

Baroness Anelay of St Johns
Chair, International Relations and Defence Committee